



**NYU**

**ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

## **PADM-GP 2171**

# **Evaluating Programs and Policies Spring 2024**

### **Instructor Information**

- Kristina Arakelyan
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- Zoom Office Hours: by appointment

### **Course Information**

- Class Meeting Times: Thursdays, 6:45-8:25pm
- Class Location: 194 Mercer St, Room 305

### **Course Pre-requisites**

All students must have completed (or waived) P11.1011 (Statistical Methods) or a similar course. This course builds on these introductory courses and lays the foundation for P11.2875 (Evaluation of Health and Social Programs).

### **Course Description and Objectives**

Program evaluation is a critical component in designing and operating effective programs. Evaluations supply information to program managers and policymakers that can assist them in making decisions about which programs to fund, modify, expand or eliminate. Evaluation can be an accountability tool for program managers and funders. This course serves as an introduction to evaluation methodology and evaluation tools commonly used to assess publicly funded programs.

Course objectives include:

- 1) become familiar with the concepts, language, methods and applications of evaluation research;
- 2) understand how to develop a logic model for an intervention and how to use it to guide evaluation;

- 3) develop the ability to formulate clear, answerable research questions for evaluation;
- 4) develop the ability to identify, modify, or develop appropriate measures of outcomes that are valid, reliable and feasible;
- 5) learn how to read evaluation research critically;
- 6) develop a detailed, feasible and rigorous evaluation proposal to assess the implementation and effectiveness of a program.

## Learning Assessment Table

<b>Course Learning Objective Covered</b>	<b>Corresponding Assignment Title</b>
#1	Program Memo Research Questions and Measurement Memo Exam Debates Optional Review Memo
#2	Program memo Exam
#3 & 4	Research Questions and Measurement Memo Final Paper
#5	Exam Debates Optional Review Memo
#6	Final Paper

## Course Structure

Students are expected to review weekly readings and videos ahead of class. Our class time will include additional lecture, opportunities for questions & answers, discussion of case studies presented in class, break-out groups to discuss case study readings and other examples, and debates towards the end of the semester. There is no specific policy or sector focus to this course, as evaluation tools are used in all policy areas and by public (government) and private (foundation) funders as well as by public and private sector program managers. Students are encouraged to relate the general material of the course to their specific program/policy interests.

## Readings

Most of the required readings are articles in peer-reviewed journals that provide “real life” case studies of evaluations. There are also a few required chapters from textbooks. All of the required articles and chapters are available on BrightSpace (by class session). The optional Weiss textbook is also available on Brightspace. For the interested student there is an additional list of *optional* readings, also located in the Readings folder.

There are two **optional** basic evaluation textbooks students may use to supplement lectures and required readings:

***Carol H. Weiss (1998) Evaluation: Methods for Studying Programs & Policies 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Prentice Hall***

***Peter Rossi, Howard Freeman, and Mark Lipsey (2004) Evaluation: A Systematic Approach, 7th ed. Sage Publications. (abbreviated in syllabus as “RFL”)***

Suggested chapters for each topic are noted on the syllabus.

## Course Requirements

Active participation is important for this “tool based” course. Students need to read required articles and chapters, view videos, and be prepared to participate in class discussion. In addition to class participation, requirements include two brief memos, one take-home exam, participation in debates, and a final paper that is a proposal for an outcome evaluation. **Note: the following descriptions are not enough to complete the assignments adequately. See Assignments section in Brightspace.**

### Program Statement: February 25

Students will submit a short (1 - 2 pages) description of a selected program/policy, indicating the problem to be addressed by the intervention, the intended beneficiaries or targets of the program, the intended benefits, and the causal model/program theory underlying the program. This memo is a preliminary step in writing the final design paper.

### Take-home Examination: March 31

There will be a take-home essay style examination.

### RQs & Measurement Memo: April 15

Using the program model developed in the first memo, students will specify the research questions, operational definitions, and specific measures they would use in an evaluation of the program. This memo represents a critical step towards the final paper.

## **Debates: May 2**

### **Debate Participation Ratings: May 4**

Students will participate as part of a pro or con team in one debate during the last class of the semester. Teammates will rate one another's participation as part of the debate grade. Additionally, students will submit questions ahead of time to me about the other two cases (i.e., the two debates where they are NOT on a debate team). Failure to submit participation ratings or questions will dock points from the debate participation grade.

### **OPTIONAL Evaluation Review (for extra credit): May 6**

It is important to become a good consumer of evaluations, if not a good evaluator oneself. Review one of three selected evaluation articles. In 2 - 3 pages, students will summarize the type of evaluation described, its design and methods, and write a critique of the evaluation. The review memo is an individual assignment.

### **Final Paper: Impact Evaluation Design: May 6**

The final paper builds on earlier assignments. Students will design a comprehensive evaluation plan for their chosen programs. The proposal will focus on outcome/impact evaluation but will include a brief section on process evaluation as well. Students are **required** to work in groups of 2-5, unless I have authorized a solo paper. Groups will submit a single final paper as well as a single program statement memo and measurement memo.

### **Relative Weight of Assignments**

- Exam: 30%
- Two memos: 10%
- Final Paper: 30%
- Class Participation: 20%
- Debate participation: 10%

### **Attendance Policy**

Since we only meet once a week, I expect everyone to attend every class. If for any reason you will be unable to attend class, please let me know in advance.

If you are feeling unwell, please rest and focus on your health. Absences on account of illness, quarantine, travel disruptions, and other extenuating circumstances will, of course, be excused.

### **Late Policy**

Please see each assignment prompt for the respective late policy.

## **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by [Wagner's Academic Code](#). All Wagner students have already read and signed the [Wagner Academic Oath](#). Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with me.

## **Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at NYU**

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities \(CSD\) website](#) and click the “Get Started” button. You can also call or email CSD (212-998-4980 or [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu)) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

## **NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays**

[NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide with exams to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.

## **NYU's Wellness Exchange**

[NYU's Wellness Exchange](#) has extensive student health and mental health resources. A private hotline (212-443-9999) is available 24/7 that connects students with a professional who can help them address day-to-day challenges as well as other health-related concerns.

## **Syllabus Modification**

I reserve the right to modify the syllabus based on input, class pace, and other factors as the term progresses.

## Course Schedule

Readings and resources, along with slides, are available on Brightspace.

### Part I: Evaluation Activities for Program Development, Planning and Implementation

#### January 25: Introduction to the Course, the Field of Program Evaluation, Scientific Method, and Stakeholders

Readings & resources:

- *Optional*: Weiss Chapters 1 & 2
- Youtube video: *The scientific method* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMGRe824kak>
- Collier AF, Munger M, Moua YK. (2012). Hmong mental health needs assessment: a community-based partnership in a small mid-western community. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 49(1-2):73-86.

#### February 1: Types of Data and Needs Assessment

Readings & resources:

- Witken, B.R. (1994). Needs Assessment Since 1981: The state of the practice
- Altschuld, J.W. (2004). Emerging dimensions of needs assessment.
- Nadeem E, Shernoff ES, Coccaro C, Stokes-Tyler D. Supporting teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic: A community-partnered rapid needs assessment.
- Suiter, S.V. (2017). Community health needs assessment and action planning in seven Dominican bateyes.

#### February 8: Explicating and Assessing Program Theory

Readings & resources:

- *Optional*: Weiss Chapter 3
- Kaplan, S.A. and Garrett, K.E. (2005). The use of logic models by community-based initiatives.
- Chen, W. & Lin (1997). Evaluating the process and outcome of a garbage reduction program in Taiwan.
- Becker, K.L. (2017). Dance your heart out: a community's approach to addressing cardiovascular health by using a logic model.

#### February 15: Process Evaluation, Program Monitoring, and Implementation Analysis

Readings & resources:

- Mye, S.C. and Moracco, K.E. (2015). "Compassion, pleasantry, and hope": A process evaluation of a volunteer-based nonprofit.

- Whiting-Collins L, Tawk M, Karp C, Robinson WC, Metzler J. Fostering Protective Assets Among Syrian Refugee Girls Who Experience Child Marriage: Findings from a Formative Program Evaluation.
- Berry, C.A., Krutz, G.S., Langner, B., and Budetti, P. Jump-starting collaboration: the ABCD initiative and the provision of child development services through Medicaid and collaborators. *Public Administration Review*, 68(3):480 - 490.

### **Program memo due February 25**

## **Part II: Measuring the Impacts of Programs**

### **February 22: Internal Validity**

#### Readings & resources:

- *Optional:* Weiss Chapter 8
- Grace, AM, et al. (2014) Educating health care professionals on human trafficking. *Pediatric emergency care*, 30(12), 856–861.
- Editorial. (2008). The Importance of External Validity. *American Journal of Public Health*. January (98). No.1. pp. 9-10.
- Youtube video: *What is internal validity?*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SxU59eGT5wI&t=1s>

### **February 29 and March 7: Randomized Experimental Design**

#### Readings & resources:

- *Optional:* Weiss Chapter 9
- Seron, C., Ryzin, G.V., Frankel, M., & Kovath, J. (2001). The impact of legal counsel on outcomes for poor tenants in New York City's housing court: results of a randomized experiment.
- Modestino, A. S., & Paulsen, R. J. (2019). Reducing inequality summer by summer: Lessons from an evaluation of the Boston Summer Youth Employment Program.
- Youtube video: *Why randomize?*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uxqw2Pgm7s8&t=128s>

### **March 14: Quasi-experimental Designs with Comparison Groups**

#### Readings & resources:

- *Optional:* RFL Chapter 9 pp 265-286
- Bowen, D.J, Quintilian, L.M., Bhosrekar, S.G., Goodman, R. and Smith, E. (2018). Changing the housing environment to reduce obesity in public housing residents: a cluster randomized trial.
- Robinson M, Mackay D, Giles L, Lewsey J, Richardson E, Beeston C. (2021) Evaluating the impact of minimum unit pricing (MUP) on off-trade alcohol sales in Scotland: an interrupted time-series study.

- Cowen, J.M., Fleming, D.J., Witte, J.F., Wolf, P.J., and Kisida, B. (2013). School vouchers and student attainment: Evidence from a state-mandated study of Milwaukee's parental choice program.

**NOTE: No class on March 21 Spring Break**

**March 28: Formulating Research Questions**

Readings & resources:

- Moore, K. (2008). Quasi-Experimental Designs. *Child Trends*.
- Nakamura, R. et al (2014). Impact on alcohol purchasing of a ban on multi-buy promotions.
- Ballart X & Riba C. (1995) "Impact of legislation requiring moped and motorbike riders to wear helmets." *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 18: 311-320.
- *Optional*: Chemin M. (2008) "The benefits and costs of microfinance: evidence from Bangladesh." *Journal of Development Studies*, 44(4): 463-484.

**Exam answers due March 31**

**April 4: Measuring Outcomes**

Readings & resources

- *Optional*: Weiss, Chapter 6
- Litwin, M.S. (2003). How to Assess and Interpret Survey Psychometrics, Chapters 1- 3.
- Berry, C.A., Shalowitz, M.U, Quinn, K.A., and Wolf, R. (2001) Validation of the Crisis in Family Systems-Revised, a Contemporary Measure of Life Stressors.
- Kim, M.G. and Kim, J. (2010). Cross-validation of reliability, convergent and discriminant validity for the problematic online game use scale.
- Youtube video (refresher only): *Nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio data*  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPHYPXBK\\_ks](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPHYPXBK_ks)

**April 11: Strengthening Single Sample Designs**

Readings & resources:

- *Optional*: Weiss, review Chapter 8 pp. 191-199
- RFL Chapter 9 pp. 289-295
- Wheeler-Martin, K., Sogholan, S., Prosser, J.M., Manini, A.F., Marker, E., Stajic, M., Prezant, D., Nelson, L.S., and Hoffman, R.S. (2015). Impact of mandatory carbon monoxide alarms: and investigation of the effects on detection and poisoning rates in New York City.
- Bilal Iqbal Avan, Della Berhanu, Yirgalem Mekonnen, Emma Beaumont, Keith Tomlin, Elizabeth Allen, Joanna Schellenberg. (2021). Embedding Community-Based Newborn Care in the Ethiopian health system: lessons from a 4-year programme evaluation.
- *Optional*: Youtube video: *Interrupted time series analysis*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGHrYwhOtOO>



## ***RQs & Measurement memo due April 15***

### **April 18: External Validity and Sampling**

#### Readings & resources

- Babbie, E. (2012). *The Practice of Social Research*, Chapter 7
- Karlan, D. and J Appel (2016) Chapter 5: Low Participation Rates in Field Research: What we can learn when field research goes wrong. Princeton University Press. pp. 62-69.
- *Optional*: Patton, M.Q. (1990). "Purposeful Sampling" in *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage. pp. 169-186.
- Youtube video: *What is external validity?*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jX38E5mtNk>
- Youtube video: *Sampling: simple random, convenience, systematic, cluster, stratified*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=be9e-Q-jC-0>

### **April 25: Ethical Considerations in Program Evaluation & Evaluation Synthesis**

- *Optional*: Weiss, Chapter 14
- American Evaluation Association Ethical Guiding Principles (2018 Update)
- *Optional*: Weiss Chapter 10, pp 235 – 244
- Webb, T.L., Joseph, J., Yardley, L., and Michie, S. (2010). Using the internet to promote health behavior change: a systematic review and meta-analysis of the impact of theoretical basis, use of behavior change techniques, and mode of delivery on efficacy.
- *Youtube video: A three minute primer on meta-analysis*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i675gZNe3MY>

### **May 2: DEBATES**

- Debate 1: Modestino, A. S., & Paulsen, R. J. (2019). Reducing inequality summer by summer: Lessons from an evaluation of the Boston Summer Youth Employment Program.
- Debate 2: Robinson M, Mackay D, Giles L, Lewsey J, Richardson E, Beeston C. (2021) Evaluating the impact of minimum unit pricing (MUP) on off-trade alcohol sales in Scotland: an interrupted time-series study.
- Debate 3: Cowen, J.M., Fleming, D.J., Witte, J.F., Wolf, P.J., and Kisida, B. (2013). School vouchers and student attainment: Evidence from a state-mandated study of Milwaukee's parental choice program.

#### ***Debate Team Ratings due May 4***

#### ***OPTIONAL Evaluation Review due May 6***

#### ***Final Paper due May 6***